

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000830

SIPDIS

AF FOR DAS T. WOODS  
AF/S FOR B. NEULING  
OVP FOR NULAND  
NSC FOR DNSA ABRAMS, SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE  
DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA  
USAID FOR A/A LLOYD PIERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2010  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [Z1](#)  
SUBJECT: A LOOK BACK AS OPERATION "RESTORE ORDER" ENTERS  
WEEK FOUR

REF: HARARE 737

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i, Eric Schultz, under Section 1.4  
b/d

-----  
Overview  
-----

[11.](#) (C) As the GOZ,s crackdown, code-named Operation &Murambatsvina<sup>8</sup> or &Restore Order<sup>8</sup> enters its fourth week it shows no sign of slowing down. The crackdown began shortly after Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono,s national address on May 19, in which he blamed the informal economy for sabotaging the government,s economic program. The police subsequently entered Harare,s &high-density suburbs<sup>8</sup> slums peopled by the country,s poor and largely bastions of support for the political opposition. Armed with torches, sledgehammers and bulldozers the police began systematically destroying &illegal<sup>8</sup> homes as well as informal markets.

[12.](#) (C) The crackdown intensified the following week. The police responded violently to resistance from slum-dwellers, arresting over 20,000 people. By the end of the third week of the crackdown credible estimates of the number of people who had lost their homes and businesses ranged up to 200,000. The destruction has not been confined to Harare but has included all of Zimbabwe,s major towns and many smaller cities as well. Mutare, the third largest city, has seen some of the worst destruction, with some 50,000 people made homeless.

[13.](#) (C) The homeless and destitute victims of the crackdown have been told to return to their &rural<sup>8</sup> roots; in many cases they were forced to do so. However, many of these people were turned away from rural villages, and are now caught in a no man,s land ) unable to rebuild and unable to move. Many are sleeping out in the open, trying to protect what,s left of their possessions and to protect themselves and their families from Harare,s cold winter nights.

[14.](#) (C) Despite the suffering that has already occurred, the government has signaled that the operation will continue -- to its &logical conclusion<sup>8</sup> in the words of one senior GOZ official. The focus now seems likely to shift to rural areas, specifically the small holder farmers who were encouraged a few short years ago to seize land on white commercial farms and who are now seen as an impediment to productive large-scale commercial farming. As Zimbabwe braces for the next phase of the government crackdown, and as a food emergency looms ever closer, the Embassy provides the eyewitness accounts below of the what has already occurred as, in the words of the country,s religious leaders, the GOZ makes war on the poor rather than on poverty.

-----  
Around Harare  
-----

[15.](#) (SBU) It is not possible to drive around Harare without noticing the changes. Checkpoints have been maintained nearly continuously on most major roads. Nearly all flea markets and roadside stalls have been demolished or preemptively torn down by vendors. Even in areas designated by the City of Harare as &People,s Markets<sup>8</sup> the vendors are gone. On May 28, in the Operation,s early days, a local Embassy employee went to a shopping center she frequents in Zengeza, a southern suburb of the city. She was told that the police had been there an hour earlier and told the vendors to move. As she watched, two police trucks with policemen in riot gear accompanied by a garbage truck pulled up. Police drove off the vendors, burned the stalls, and loaded the goods on the garbage truck. Anyone who did not run away was beaten.

[16.](#) (C) On June 13, embassy officers in Harare interviewed a woman from Hatcliffe Extension, a northern suburb. She said

all the homes in her neighborhood were destroyed two weeks ago, and police moved the woman and part of her family to Caledonia Farm, a holding center for displaced persons about 20 kms east of Harare. Some of her children had gone to stay with relatives in a rural area near Mutare. At Caledonia Farm, the family was sleeping in the open with thousands of others, with few sanitary facilities, no cooking facilities, and no transportation back to Harare, where she worked. Her children have not been able to return to school. Last week police told her that she and her family would need to vacate Caledonia Farm and return to her rural home in eastern Zimbabwe by Wednesday, June 15.

17. (C) In a June 2 visit to Mbare, Harare's oldest and largest high-density suburb, Embassy officers saw innumerable homes reduced to rubble, with possessions and building materials on fire, as were what had been formerly roadside stalls. Thousands of people milled about in open fields or along roads with furniture, suitcases, and whatever they could salvage from their households. Many homes still stood, but we witnessed many families dismantling surviving structures themselves in an apparent effort to salvage some building materials. People were also selling their possessions and one man approached Embassy staff offering to find whatever we wanted to buy. On a later visit, a Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) member told police on June 6 that police were telling Mbare residents they would impose a Z\$3 million fee for each structure they had to destroy ) additional encouragement for people to destroy their own homes.

18. (SBU) Police destruction is now including what appear to be fully authorized, fee-paying facilities. On May 31, Embassy staff visited a business complex near Harare, airport whose owners had purchased the land from the city four years ago and have been paying for city of Harare services. Authorities told the owners that the City Council had no record of their purchase and that there was no official authorization for the buildings they erected. The owners have every reason to fear for the future of their business. The demolition also has not been limited to opposition strongholds. The Political Counselor visited the war veteran squatter camp on White Cliff Farm, on the western edge of Harare. The camp comprised thousands of cinderblock shacks on one-acre plots built over the past five years. The entire camp had been razed the week before, and, by the time he visited the site June 5, few of the thousands of former residents remained. Their whereabouts were unknown.

-----  
Other Cities  
-----

19. (C) Driving on the Mutare road from Harare, June 1, Embassy staff saw plumes of smoke rising from the high-density areas of Mutare. Upon entering the city center, we saw police officers in Mutare, central square preparing to force merchants to tear down their stands. In the high-density suburbs, residents were taking down their own businesses and homes. The area was thick with smoke. The police had sent warnings ahead and residents were not waiting for their arrival. One resident told us that he, his wife, and their two children were sleeping on what used to be the foundation of their home. Mutare Mayor Kagurabadza confirmed that many people were now sleeping outdoors in the cold, while others were reportedly moving back to their rural homes. We observed people exiting the city on trucks loaded with possessions or waiting for rides with bags and boxes. Kagurabadza said many of the people whose homes had been destroyed in Mutare were still employed but were finding it difficult to get to work with nowhere to sleep or put their personal property.

110. (SBU) The weekend of May 28 and 29, an Embassy officer in Victoria Falls saw dozens of homes burning and people milling about in the streets holding their possessions, uncertain of where to go or what to do. Some of the victims reported that police were confiscating electronic goods for which the individuals did not have receipts.

-----  
Smaller Towns and Rural Areas  
-----

11. (SBU) Rural displacement has taken place largely off the radar of media and NGOs. However, the ZANU-PF stronghold of Bindura in the heart of Mashonaland was completely cleared of flea markets and "unauthorized" homes. Displaced persons were dismantling their homes when embassy staff drove through on the morning of June 3. One couple told us that police had already demolished their vendor stall and had given them until noon that day to vacate their home. They said they had nowhere to go and planned to return to their rural home.

-----  
Comment

-----

12. (C) The GOZ's inhumane treatment of its own population on such a massive scale is shocking in and of itself. However, given that the government is systematically creating a larger pool of vulnerable people with a food crisis imminent, it may go well beyond just inhumane. These have been evil acts by an evil regime. In the past month, we have heard few people in Zimbabwe, local or foreign, query us about the basis for the Secretary's designation of the GOZ as an outpost of tyranny.<sup>8</sup> As we have reported elsewhere, the challenge the international community faces is how to help the people of Zimbabwe when their own government seems at war with them. In that regard, the passiveness of the people (and the opposition) in the face of government repression is disheartening. The apparent degree to which Zimbabweans seem prepared to absorb abuse and suffering without resistance offers little hope that badly needed regime change will come any time soon to Zimbabwe.

SCHULTZ